

REACHING NEW FRONTIERS: EXPANDING THE LATINO AGENDA

My father, the Honorable Amilkar Velez-Lopez, Newark Municipal Court Judge and the Central Judicial Processing Court Judge of Essex County, was scheduled to appear today, but applicable rules of the court prevents him from addressing this activity. He wishes to thank the organizers, also Marilyn, Norma and _____, _____, Special agent_____. He also wishes to apologize for being unable to appear. He would have gladly greeted you with a DIOS ME LOS BENDIGA=May God bless you.

Nevertheless, he asked me to speak to you.

One of the reasons he was asked to speak to you, is because he serves as a role model for hundreds, perhaps thousands, of young Latinos and Latinas..

He enjoys mentoring young people and challenges them to improve themselves through education and hard work. His father taught him that == " EL QUE PERSEVERA- TRIUNFA ", meaning, " He who perseveres—triumphs ". That is the challenge to each of you.

However, let me tell you a few facts as to his life.

He was born in the beautiful town of Adjuntas, Puerto Rico in 1946. He attended school in the countryside until the 6th grade. His family then moved to San Juan, PR and eventually came to New York City in 1959, as part of the Puerto Rican migration to the continent in search of better economic opportunities, which began in the 1940s and continued until the 1970s. By now Puerto Ricans number @ 4 million in the continent and another 4 million in PR. Migration of PRs to the continent is an ongoing experience.

He was a founding member of the BORIQUEN ASPIRA CLUB at George Washington HS in NYC and was elected to the student government on various occasions.

His high school guidance counselor told his family that he was not college material and that he should be in the vocational track.

Gracias a Dios , that they did not listen to that idiotic statement. However , that message still goes out to many of our youth.

He returned to San German , PR , in 1964 to study at Inter American University and graduated cum laude in 1968 with a BA in Sociology and a minor in Social Work.

He then entered Columbia University in 1968 and graduated in 1970 with a Masters in Social Work.

He married and soon my sister Myrna Arsenet Velez was born. Then I followed and then my little sister Katilia Yuisa Velez was born.

Myrna is now a Masters Program student, I am a Lieutenant with the Newark Police Dept. and Katilia is a student at Inter American University. Katilia will be honored by the COMITE' NOVIEMBRE, a national PR organization, at the New York Hilton , due to the fact that she fought MTV , via the internet, when they presented a racist anti Puerto Rican program and forced them to remove it from the air and replace it with positive programming and images.

While working full time, and bringing us up, our father studied at Seton Hall Law School at nights and eventually graduated in 1979, also cum laude.

My father comes from a working family that was not rich. His mother, America, and his father, Miguel, worked in factories in New York and in New Jersey to give him an education. They always encouraged him to study and fought with the educational system in NYC to achieve it.

He studied hard and earned scholarships and grants which permitted him to study and earn his degrees.

However, he never forgot his roots and his community.

During his life he has being active in the political , social , educational, legal and charity arenas.

I remember him coming late from serving the people of Newark, NJ, almost all the time as a volunteer.

He is a founding member of many organizations in NYC and in New Jersey, especially in Paterson and Newark, NJ.

Here in Newark, NJ, he helped to establish the P.R. Educators Assoc., C.U.R.A., Inc. (a drug rehabilitation agency now covering five cities in NJ, CASA Don Pedro, the Newark Borinquen Lions Club, the Hispanic Bar Association, OYE, Inc., among others.

He was also the first Program Director of ASPIRA of New Jersey and the first social Worker of the Newark Bilingual Program and was its Director for a period of time.

He established his private practice in 1980 and served as an attorney until 2000, when he was appointed a Newark Municipal jJudge by the Hon, Sharpe James, former mayor of Newark.

He now serves at the Central Judicial Processing Court of Essex county.

He has received many awards and recognitions throughout his life and is very proud to be a Puerto Rican and a Latino.

He is now married to Norma Mutt and is also de proud grandather of 5 precious kids and the adopted grandfather of 6 more and the adopted father of 4 more wonderful persons, including Wanda Nieves an attorney in Newark, NJ.

He is also the adopted uncle to dozens and dozens of nephews and nieces.

Now addressing the theme of expanding the Latino agenda.

First we should examine the term LATINO.

Who is a Latino ? Latino is really a linguistic and a cultural term. It is NOT a racial term. It is a term derived from Latin, the language. We are a blend of white, Africans, and Amerindians, such as the Tainos , Incas, Mayans, Aztecs and many more. In fact we Latinos come in all sizes, colors and races . From blond and blue eyed as Cameron Diaz, to black as Sammy Sosa, to Arabic as Shakira, to Japanese as former Peruvian president Alberto Fujimori, or German, Russian, Polish , etc.

According to www.America.gov we presently make up 47 million of the US population and thus 15.4 % of the people in this country. We are the youngest ethnic group.

Latinos even participated in the Revolutionary War and during the Civil War.

Latinos have won Nobel Prizes, lead Fortune 500 companies, participated in each and every field of endeavor.

However , We have finally begun our ascent to the places and positions that have been denied entirely too long to the Latinos.

We now have @ 13 latinos astronauts such as Joseph M. Acaba, the first Boricua in space.

We have the first Latina United States Supreme Court Justice, the Hon. Sonia Sotomayor, also a Boricua who is more qualified than any other member of the US Supreme Court—ever.

We have Labor Secretary Hilda Solis and Interior Secretary Ken Salazar. In fact Latinos in the U.S. comprise the fifth largest Spanish-Speaking population in the world.

The projected purchase power of Latinos will be \$ 1 . 2 trillion dollars in 2012.

Finally, history teaches us, that when a nation includes each and every group, including those that for long have been denied such opportunities, the nation , as a whole, benefits.

When democracy is more representative, then the entire country is enriched thereby. By including all of us, more talent becomes available, new potentials are awakened and new solutions will be developed for the benefit of the nation.

As FBI employees make sure that you==yourself—look at the new frontiers. This includes a new frontier in digital evidence. Learn how to use the cell phones to obtain evidence, how to use the PDAs, digital cameras. As the director of the Center for Digital Information says, “increasingly, they contain information pertinent to a specific event under investigation or intelligence to link individuals to one another.”

At the 2003 International Conference on Crime and Technology, the topic was New Frontiers for Legislation, Law Enforcement and Research.

Why not challenge yourself to learn more about this topic ?

In fact many agencies are now involved in reaching new frontiers with Latinos, including NASA which hosted the 5th. Annual Hispanic Youth Conference to motivate Latinos to study and then join NASA.

Furthermore, LULAC, the League of United Latin American Citizens just held its 2009 Convention in PR in July. Their theme was also Reaching New Frontiers: Expanding the Latino Agenda.

Such expansion must include more Latinos in top governmental positions, in elected positions, in the sciences, in the business world, etc.

The first New Frontier was implemented by our President, John F. Kennedy. President Barack Obama is now implementing the NEW New Frontier. This is an opportunity that has been long in coming. Do not let it pass you by. Do not pass it up.

If under President Kennedy we got to the moon, certainly we can achieve more progress for Latinos, in ALL areas.

Your challenge is to be ready, be prepared, be professional and never permit anyone, anyone, to disrespect you == your Latino heritage == or your family.

As my father always says==BE READY FOR WAR==BUT HOPE FOR PEACE.

Que Dios los bendiga ricamente !!